

## CLAIMS

1. An apparatus for use in accessing sets of information stored in an information system, the apparatus having:
- 5 a user interface providing access to at least one information retrieval tool;  
a store for recording data relating to information retrieval by users;  
monitoring means operable, on receipt from a user at said user interface of one or more search criteria for submission to said at least one information retrieval tool, to detect an indication by said user that a set of information identified by said  
10 at least one information retrieval tool using said search criteria, is relevant, and to record said one or more search criteria and a reference to said relevant set of information in said store;
- weighting means arranged to calculate, in respect of a set of information referenced in said store, a weighting for each search criterion recorded against  
15 said referenced set of information, said weighting being indicative of the proportion of users who, upon using the recorded search criterion with said at least one information retrieval tool, identified said referenced set of information as being relevant; and
- analysis means to identify a recorded search criterion having, for each  
20 member of a group comprising one or more sets of information referenced in said store, a weighting in excess of a predetermined threshold.
2. An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said monitoring means are arranged to detect an indication comprising a request by said user to access a set  
25 of information identified by said at least one information retrieval tool.
3. An apparatus according to Claim 1 or Claim 2, wherein said analysis means are arranged to identify a recorded search criterion having, for each member of a first group comprising one or more sets of information selected by a  
30 user from those sets referenced in said store, a weighting in excess of said predetermined threshold.

4. An apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein said analysis means are further arranged to receive a search criterion from said user interface, to identify a second group comprising one or more sets of information referenced in said store for which said received search criterion has a weighting in excess of  
5 said predetermined threshold, and to identify one or more further recorded search criteria having, in respect of each member of said second group, a weighting in excess of said predetermined threshold.

5. An apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said  
10 search criteria include words or word phrases and wherein said monitoring means  
are operable to record words from said one or more search criteria in a stemmed  
form.

6. An apparatus according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said analysis means include grouping means to identify one or more information categories represented by sets of information referenced in said store, to associate one or more of said referenced sets of information representative of the same information category, and wherein said analysis means are arranged to identify those recorded search criteria having, for each of said associated sets of information, a weighting in excess of said predetermined threshold.

7. A method of accessing sets of information stored in an information system, comprising the steps of:

(i) detecting submission by a user of a search criterion to an information  
25 retrieval tool, and a corresponding response from the retrieval tool;

(ii) detecting an indication by the user as to the relevance of a set of information identified in the response from the retrieval tool;

(iii) storing a reference to the set of information indicated as being relevant at step (ii), and a record of the search criterion submitted by the user at step (i);

30 (iv) selecting one or more sets of information referenced in the store and calculating, for each search criterion recorded in respect of each of said one or more selected sets of information, a weighting indicative of the proportion of users

who, on submitting the search criterion to the information retrieval tool, identified the selected set of information and indicated that it was relevant; and

(v) identifying, in respect of said one or more selected sets of information from step (iv), a recorded search criterion having, in respect of each said selected  
5 set of information, a weighting in excess of a predetermined threshold.

8. A method according to Claim 7, wherein, at step (iv), each said selected set of information is representative of the same category of information, and wherein the method includes the step:

10 (vi) using said identified search criterion from step (v) to search for further sets of information in said category of information.

9. A method according to Claim 7 or Claim 8, wherein, at step (ii), said indication comprises accessing a set of information identified in the response from the retrieval tool.

10. A method according to Claim 9, wherein, at step (ii), detecting said indication includes measuring the time spent by the user in accessing said set of information.

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11. A method according to Claim 10, wherein, at step (iv), said weighting is adjusted according to the measurements of time spent by users in accessing the respective selected set of information.

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